with the affectionate regards
of the author.

MORAL EDUCATION.

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A

LECTURE

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BEFORE THE

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION,

BY

GEORGE B. EMERSON.

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LECTURE

ON

MORAL EDUCATION.

BY GEORGE B. EMERSON.

The subject assigned to me by the Committee of Arrangements is Moral Education. It seems to be generally admitted, that no part of education is so important, and none so much neglected, as this. Such is the language of the school returns in this State; such is the testimony of those who have visited the Common Schools in the other States, and of all who are acquainted with the course and manner of instruction, wherever the English language is spoken. This is at once an encouraging and a terrible admission. It is encouraging, because the first step towards the correction of an evil, is to admit its existence and its enormity. But it is terrible to know that, with all our boasted advancement, we still fail of this great and all-important end. To neglect the moral ele-

ment, while we cultivate the lower propensities and the intellect, is to mistake the plan of the Creator, who, in making man, has endowed him with all the faculties of a brute, and all the capacities of a demon, but has made him a little lower than the angels, by lighting within him that flame which burns with an ethereal light, significant of its heavenly origin; it is to let this celestial flame go out, while we minister fuel to the consuming fires of the brutal and demoniacal parts of our nature.

To come forward to point out the fearful mistake we have made, and to presume to show how it may be corrected, should need, I am aware, an apology. While there is a class of men, whose high office it is to educate our moral and spiritual powers, to reinstate conscience on its throne, and show us how all else should be brought into subjection to it, it would have been much more fit that one of this class should now occupy this place, and teach us this lesson; and I cannot but feel how much more reverently, on such a subject, you would have listened to his voice. But they have done their part of the work. The great truths have been clearly declared. The high principles have been eloquently laid down. An humbler but not less essential part is ours; not to reason out new truths, not to bring new illustrations, but to draw conclusions which may be applicable to the daily duties of our life, and faithfully, wisely, and courageously, to apply them.

In treating this subject, we shall first endeavor to ascertain what is to be done. What is the moral education at which we should aim? In the second place, What have we to act upon? And lastly, how shall we effect our purpose.

What, then, is moral education ? It is to awaken conscience, to give it activity, and to establish the pre-eminence which belongs to it among the feelings, propensities, and powers, of the human mind and character.

It comprehends moral instruction and moral training, the teaching what the duties are, and the formation of moral habits. It is the education of the conscience which has been chiefly neglected ; yet this, more than any other part of our nature, should receive, from the beginning, constant and careful attention.

An examination of what we are to act upon, will show the truth of this position, and indicate an answer to the third question, How is it to be effected ?

Whatever may be our object in teaching, whether it be merely to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, or, in connection with them, to communicate information which shall be useful to our pupils in future life ; or the higher one of disciplining the powers of the mind, so as to give them their greatest energy and activity ; or this highest object, of adding to all these an education of the moral nature, which shall make our pupil come forth prepared for action, full of respect for right, and of reverence for the Author of right, and fitted "to perform, justly, skilfully, and magnanimously, all offices, both private and public ;"—whatever view we take of our duty, we must act upon the mind, and it would seem to be essential that we should know something of the mind on which we would act ; of the human character, of all its elements, as they exist in the constitution of a child.

Here is the most complex and curious piece of machinery ever made,—the work of a hand divine ;—

"How noble in reason ! how infinite in faculties ! in

form and moving, how express and admirable ! in action, how like an angel ! in apprehension, how like a god !"— Can the knowledge of this come to us intuitively ? I exhort you to make it a study. What study can be more worthy or more suitable ? Remember, it is not many things, but one,—one wonderful machine of many parts,— all so related as to be dependent on each other ; all essential ; each unintelligible without some knowledge of the rest. All must therefore be known,—body, mind, soul, —if you would act, with any hope of success, on the highest.

If you were about to engage, in a capacity higher than that of a day laborer, in any other pursuit than that of teaching, would you not set yourself at once to understand what was the object which you should endeavor to have in view, and what the machinery by which you could attain it ? If you were going to manufacture woollen goods, you would wish to understand the nature of the raw material, the processes and machinery by which it is to be acted on, and to judge of the quality of the article you wished to produce. Will you do less, when the mechanism with which you are to operate is the work of an Infinite Architect ? and the web to be woven is the rich and varied fabric of human character ?

If you were about to engage in agriculture, you would take care to inform yourself as to the nature of the soil, its adaptation to the various kinds of grain and vegetables, and the season of the year at which, in this climate, it is most proper to prepare the ground, to plough, to sow the seed, and to reap and gather into the barn. Will you take less care, when the soil is the human soul, the

seed is the word of life, the harvest, the end of the world, and the reapers, angels ?

If you were going to navigate the ocean, you would wish to know how to judge of the ship, to sail and steer ; you would inquire about the currents that would set you from your course, and the winds that should bear you onward; you would learn to trace the moon's course among the stars, and to look aloft to the sun in his path, that you might not drift at random on the broad sea, but speed towards your desired haven, as if you could see it rising before you above the blue waves. So much you would do that you might convey in safety a few tons of merchandise ; and all men would hold you unwise if you did less. Shall they not tax you with worse than folly if you make less preparation when your ship is the human soul, freighted with a parent's and a nation's hopes,—with the hopes of immortality,—if you fail to study the currents of passion, to provide against the rocks of temptation, and to look aloft for the guiding light which shines only from Heaven ?

But, to speak without simile, the study of mental philosophy is of the greatest importance to a teacher, in every point of view. If we would exercise the several powers, we must know what they are, and by what discipline they are to be trained. If we would cultivate them harmoniously, in their natural order and proportion, we must know which of them first come into action, which are developed at a later age, and what are the province and functions of each. Without this knowledge, we can hardly fail of losing the most propitious times for beginning their cultivation ; we shall make the common mistake of attempting certain studies too soon, or we shall

make use of means little suited to the ends we have in view.

Important as this study is, it is no more difficult than any other, if, in regard to it, we take the same course which we find the true one in other investigations,—if, laying aside conjectures, dreams, and speculations, we adopt the safe and philosophical rule, to observe carefully and extensively the facts, and draw from them only their legitimate conclusions.

There are three sources from which we are to draw light; first, the facts of our own consciousness, the most difficult of all to consult; second, the facts we observe in the mental growth of others, especially of children; and last, the great storehouse of recorded facts contained in the works of those who, directly or indirectly, have written upon this subject.

I have no thought of going into this wide field of inquiry. I am only desirous of contributing the mite of my own experience to the common treasure of truth in regard to the question before us. I freely confess that, however admirable are the writings of what are called the metaphysicians,—and some of them are certainly among the richest, loftiest, most eloquent, and delightful writers, in the Greek, French, and English languages,—I say nothing of the unknown vast of German metaphysics,—however much of grand conception, of elevating thought, of food for the mind in its highest mood, I may have found, or of speculation which enlarged the boundaries of mental dominion,—I have derived from them little of practical value, to guide me in the daily routine of my duties. Their work has been done. Its effects are in the world; and it would be vain and idle to deny the good wrought

for humanity by the divine Plato,—the ideal of sublime imagination,—the severe Aristotle,—the close observer, reducing the processes of human thought to the necessary laws of truth,—the all-embracing Cousin, the polished Stewart, the philosophic Reid, the eloquent Brown, and the crowd of others, who occupy the upper air. None, doubtless, have done more than they to advance this very work in which we are engaged ; but in this empyrean, I have seen no one leading star, upon which I could fix my eyes and go safely over the dark and stormy waves.

To confine ourselves to the one subject before us, the first, so far as I know, who, reasoning from the facts of human nature, and guided by the gospel, has given its true place to the conscience among the elements of human character, is Bishop Butler. His three discourses upon Human Nature place in a clear and prominent light this whole subject of the subordination of the other parts of our constitution, and the preëminence and authority of the conscience,—by which he evidently means the natural sentiment of conscientiousness, enlightened by an examination of our manifold relations, and with its empire enlarged and its action quickened by reflection. All his discourses are of great practical value to the teacher who would teach a code of morals founded at once upon reason and the light of nature, and upon revelation. It is true, they demand serious study, but they richly deserve the profoundest thought that can be given to them.

I would next refer you to the author of a discourse upon the "Constitution of Man." I insist not upon the physiological views on which this work professes to have been built. I long held them in derision, and am still

too ignorant in regard to them to have an opinion of any value. I speak now only of the classification of the propensities, sentiments, and faculties, which it contains, and the observations which are made upon them. By these a light is thrown upon the path of the educator which he looked for in vain from any other source.

I would also refer you to the works of the writers upon physiology, particularly to the work of Dr. Combe. So intimately are all the parts of the human constitution connected, and so vitally do the mental and moral depend upon the physical powers, that we can understand either only by studying them in connection with the others. For this reason, the knowledge of the laws of the structure, growth, development, and health of the body, is essential to a comprehension of the corresponding particulars in the phenomena of mind. And in no other way do we learn the all-important law, that every faculty of body and mind, every sentiment and every affection, is to be improved by exercise.

I have pointed out the three sources from which we are to obtain information in regard to that point in the philosophy of mind which is important to us in our present inquiry,—reflection upon what has occurred and is occurring within ourselves, observation upon the facts exhibited by others, and the study of books. From each of these we infer the fact that the conscience begins to act with the very dawn of our faculties, and with it begin the two other essential elements of the moral nature,—love and veneration. Few of us can look back in memory to the time before which we had no feelings of right and wrong, or of affection for our friends, or of reverence for the Author of our being. And though each of these

sentiments manifests itself with different degrees of force in different individuals, yet how constantly do we observe, in children of the tenderest age, an artlessness of truth, a warmth of affection, and a confiding humility and sincerity of reverence, which bring to our hearts the words of the Saviour, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." We have no epithets for purity, innocence, truthfulness, loveliness, trust, which mean so much as the single word *childlike;* and Jesus, when he would answer the question, "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven," "called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them." Thus we have light from heaven thrown upon the conclusion which we had drawn from our earliest faint recollections of infancy, from the angelic aspect and first acts of childhood, and from the recorded observations of other men. At this age, then, moral education should begin, and the first teacher must be the mother.

This is not the occasion to dwell on maternal influence. But let it be remembered that it often rests upon the mother to give a shape to the future character. Reverence, truth, love, must exist in her breast, before she can impart them to her child. And perfect physical health, so important to the nurse of her own offspring, is but an emblem of the healthfulness of soul which she should possess. Unless the moral education be early and rightly begun, it will be in danger of beginning wrong at a later period. If, therefore, the mother would save her child from the infinite evils of a perverted education, she must begin herself to educate him aright; she must begin to teach him that heaven-inspired lesson, *to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with* GOD,—

that wonderful epitome of duty to which human wisdom has been unable to add. Let the mother see to it that the first words which the child learns shall be words of truth, and that he be not, by act or look, by fear or by bribery, taught the arts of deception.

Justice is of such moment that it must never be violated, in the value of a pin. "Go back," said a Christian mother to her boy, "carry the pin back and restore it; it is not thine." This simple lesson made an impression, which years and the world's wisdom never erased; for nothing is little in the education of a child. And with men, as well as children, a violation of justice, no matter in what amount, is a great violation. Great injury is done to the conscience by giving softening names to bad things. A falsehood should be called a *lie*, and not a *fib*, and any departure from truth should be looked upon as reprehensible. He had studied the boundaries of truth, and the path which leads to falsehood carefully, who said that a child ought not to be allowed to state that as having happened in one window, which had actually taken place in another. Exact truth is the only rule for children.

In regard to the law of affection, it can hardly be necessary to say any thing. A mother's heart is usually right and true on that point, however false and wrong it may be on every other. The union of the law of love with that of justice, in the Christian rule, *Judge not*, is of too great importance to be omitted. The child should, from the beginning, be taught to obey this command. He should be shown that he cannot look into the thoughts of others, or see with their eyes, and that, therefore, what in himself would be a lie, may in his brother be a mis-

take. Thus, from his earliest years, may he be taught not to look at the mote in his brother's eye.

But our business is particularly with the school, and we come now to the consideration of the third question, By what means moral education is to be conducted there. It is necessary, however, to premise one or two considerations. The first is, that of the three classes into which the elements of the human mind are divided, the propensities, which are common to us with the lower animals, the intellectual faculties, and the moral sentiments,—education has to do only with the two latter. The teacher should be acquainted with the existence, nature, and laws of the animal propensities, but it is only as the good man should be acquainted with the second table of God's revealed law, that he may know how they may be repressed. They are ready enough, of their own nature, to come into action, and he must be on his guard, lest any thing should be done or suffered which will have a tendency to excite them to activity.

The second observation which I would premise is, that the teacher must have constant reference to the well-known law of physiology, that every part of our constitution, whether of the bodily frame, as our muscles and senses, or mental power, or moral faculty, is to be excited, improved, and brought to its highest perfection, by exercise, upon its appropriate object, begun at the right time, regularly continued, and proportioned in duration and force to the strength and state of the faculty. These conditions of exercise vary with every several faculty, and must be separately studied and ascertained for each.

We have seen that the essential point in moral education is to awaken the conscience, to give it activity, and

to establish it in the preëminence which, by the ordinance of the Creator, belongs to it; that it comprehends moral instruction,—the teaching what the duties are,—and moral training, or the formation of moral habits; and we have seen what knowledge of the human constitution is necessary to qualify us to understand and to perform this part of our duty.

What, then, are we to do to *awaken the conscience*, on the supposition that it has not already been done before the child is sent to school? I say *awaken*, because I believe that instruction can do nothing to create what does not already exist. The conscience is there, at the bottom of the heart; but it may be that it sleeps. From utter neglect it may have become torpid. The fire kindled by the hand of God still burns; it is not extinguished, though it may give no light; it may be dim from a parent's neglect; it may be smouldering under the ashes of early sin. What shall we do to rekindle it and raise it to a flame? What have the teachers of righteousness in all ages done? What the inspired lawgiver and prophets of the Jews? What did the Saviour do? He addressed himself directly to the conscience. "Swear not at all." "Resist not evil." "Give to him that asketh thee." "Be ye perfect." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

So must we address ourselves directly to the conscience. But to be felt, the address must come from the conscience. Formal words have no effect. Dull dissertations, or sermons upon duty, serve only to create apathy. Words that burn, must come from a heart kindled as by a live coal from off the altar. A few such words, uttered from a deep and sincere conviction of duty, go to the

conscience, and will hardly fail to arouse it. If the children have been made familiar with the vital moral teachings of the New Testament, it will be sufficient to show, of any particular duty, that it flows naturally from that fountain; or that a particular vice is forbidden, directly or indirectly, there. If the child be not familiar with these truths, the teacher must hasten to make him so. And for this purpose the lessons of the Great Teacher must be daily read, and their application to the whole circle of human duties pointed out. Moral teaching in school must be essentially like moral instruction in the pulpit. Both must come from the same source. The long and profound discourses of the pulpit are but too seldom fitted to the comprehension or condition of a child; and there are but too many children to whom the voice of religious instruction will never come but in the school-house. But whoever believes that life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel, must look thither for aid in awakening the dormant energies of the immortal soul.

In thus speaking of the gospel as the great source of moral and religious light, I would not confine others to this alone. If any one finds that he can gain light from other sources, let him obtain it thence. I only say that, for myself, I must first go to Jesus Christ. In his Sermon on the Mount, and in his other discourses, I find instruction which the voice within me assents to and confirms, for which I look in vain to all other beings that have lived. In his parable of the talents, I find a command which comes with more authority, the more I dwell upon it, to cultivate to the utmost every faculty with which I have been endowed; and this

is the lesson which it may teach others. We must obtain assistance wherever we can find it. Beginning here, we must look through creation and time, interrogate history, and the course of things, and listen to every voice which promises to give us wisdom. For our office is no less than to teach all the laws of nature and of Providence ; those which govern the body and the intellect ; those which relate to our moral and religious nature. We must, therefore, understand and point out our relation to God, the Creator of the body as well as the soul, the Author of all laws,—the material and organic, as well as the mental and moral. And it is only by insisting upon the duty of obedience to all of God's laws, that we can render the empire of conscience coëxtensive with our relations to all of his creatures.

We have next to inquire what tends directly to enlighten and cultivate this moral sense.

The same means by which we have sought to awaken it,—direct addresses to it. In regard to every act, we are to ask, or lead the child to ask, "Is it right ?" not, "Is it expedient ?" "Will it be well thought of ? Will it advance me in other men's estimation ?" but, "*Is it right ?*" "Is it consistent with God's laws ?" "Is it kind ?"

And here I would make a suggestion which is of importance. It should be our object not to impose the laws of *our own* conscience upon our pupils, but to excite theirs to action. The difference is infinite. In one case, we make blind followers ; in the other, independent agents. In the one case, we make respect for our opinions, thoughts, or reason, their guide ; in the other, their own perceptions of right and wrong. In the one case, we

give them a thread, by holding which they may be able to follow *us* as long as we are with them; in the other, we place within them a guide, ever watchful, and constantly more intelligent, to accompany them through life.

The conscience is to be enlightened by giving *instruction* in regard to the various duties. The child must be first made to understand his relation to the Creator, and a deep sense of His universal presence must be impressed upon him. His attributes must be dwelt upon; his infinite goodness, his all-comprehending wisdom, his boundless power, his holiness, his justice, and the thence resulting duties of habitual reverence and worship. The profanity of children is more frequently thoughtlessness than deliberate impiety, and a desire to offend God. And frequent addresses upon his character and presence, will be more effectual than any thing else to correct it.

Intelligible and striking illustrations of the goodness of God may be drawn from the external creation, the beauty of the fields, the waters, the sky, and the objects which live and move therein, the grateful variations of the seasons, the balmy air, the pleasant light, the happiness of existence. From the same source may be drawn illustrations of his wisdom, and especially from the wonderful structure of our own body. His power is shown in the vastness of the creation, in the sun and stars, and the motions and perfect regularity of all his great works. The sublime account of the creation, in Genesis, and many glorious passages in the Psalms and in the Prophets, may be read to children in school to impress these great truths upon them.

Some of you may ask why I insist upon these common-places of the pulpit. I answer, because I believe,

if such considerations were properly, naturally, and with the unaffected feelings which belong to them, presented to children, they might be made to grow up with an habitual sense of God's presence in his works,—so that all things seen should continually remind them of Him.

Every object in creation is different, and the minister of different feelings and thoughts, according to the view we have been accustomed to take of it. A tree, according as we look upon it, is either a mere tall, growing thing, to be cut into fuel, or sawn into plank, or it is one of the noblest and most beautiful of God's works, rising toward heaven, as should our prayers, bringing the influence of the clouds upon the earth, sheltering cattle beneath its shade, and birds in its branches, ministering, by its shape, its colors, and its motion, to man's sense of beauty, and exhibiting, in its admirable structure, such laws of arrangement, growth, strength, durability, as tax man's utmost wit to understand and admire. Should not children, if possible, be so instructed, as to see whatever of good and beauty there is to be seen, in every part of the creation, so that they may ever walk as in God's temple? Should they not be so educated that their daily and constant associations with the objects which present themselves to their senses, may be on the side of benevolence and happiness, of wisdom and truth? The exalted strains of Milton, Thomson, Cowper, Young, Coleridge, Bryant, and other poets, may be employed for the same purpose. Portions of them, after a full and feeling explanation from the teacher, may be committed to memory,—so that, while the imagination is stored with images of beauty, the memory may furnish fit expression for the feelings they suggest. To a person

so educated, the stillness of night, with the starry canopy above, would not fill the mind with fears of goblins and ghosts, but would raise it to wonder and adoration, and the warm emotions of the heart would burst spontaneously with a rapt, poetic glow, into words,—

> "There's not the smallest orb, which thou behold'st,
> But in his motion like an angel sings;"—

or clothe itself in the sublime expressions of worship,—

> "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
> Almighty."

And the mountain, in its grandeur, instead of being an image of torrents, dashing down

> "Precipitous, black, jagged rocks,"

would,

> "Like some sweet beguiling melody,
> So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
> blend with the thought,
> Till the dilating soul, enrapt, transfused,
> Into the mighty vision passing,—there
> As in her natural form, swell vast to Heaven."

Next in importance are our social duties,—those which arise from our relation to our fellow creatures, and which are comprehended in the second great commandment of the New Testament.

These should be daily and regularly explained and enforced. The general neglect of this most important part of education seems to proceed partly from a belief that it is sufficiently provided for by the instruction of parents, and of the ministers of religion. If instruction in social duties were sufficiently given elsewhere, it would indeed be superfluous to insist upon it in school. But this is far

from the case. A large portion of the parents whose children fill the public schools, are either disinclined, or are unqualified, by their want of education, or by the engrossing nature of their occupations, to give suitable instruction in social duties ; or, what produces the same effect, they conceive themselves unqualified. At home, then, the instruction is often not obtained. Neither is it, in very many cases, at church. Many children are of necessity unfrequent attendants at church ; some go not at all,—and to many more, the instructions of the pulpit are not suited. These are usually addressed to grown men ; and if, occasionally, direct addresses are made to children,—such as are present,—they are, naturally and properly, much more occupied with religious than with social duties. A regular course of instruction from the pulpit, upon social duties, adapted to the capacity of children, is, I believe, very rare. This may be right, and I do not mean to say that it is not. But it certainly is not right, that, in a country like ours, regular, systematic instruction in the social relations and duties should no where be given. The schools are eminently a social institution. They are provided by law, maintained at the public expense, and intended for the instruction of the whole community in those things which are essential to the public good. They are therefore, especially, on every account, the place in which instruction in social duties should be given.

The discovery has been made, and in some places men have begun to act upon it, that it is better to prevent the commission of crime, than to punish it when committed ; that a merciful code of school laws may be made to take the place of a sanguinary code of criminal laws ;

that good schools are better than bad jails ; that a kind schoolmaster is a more useful member of society than a savage executioner ; that capital instruction is better than capital punishment ; that it is better and easier to teach a boy to love a heavenly Judge, and keep his commandments, than to teach a man to fear an earthly judge, after he has broken the commandments ; that it is pleasanter to spend a long life in the service of God and mankind, and the enjoyment of health and prosperity, than to divide a short life between the poor-house and the prison, and end it on a gallows ; that it is better to prepare men to fill their own pockets honestly, than to tempt them to empty their neighbors' pockets dishonestly.

If these are truths, the teacher has a most important public duty to perform. If it be true that, to form the child, by daily instruction and daily training, to a regard for the laws of justice, integrity, truth, and reverence, so that he shall grow up mindful of the rights of others, a good neighbor, a good citizen, and an honest man, is better and more reasonable, than to leave him in these respects unformed or misled, and to endeavor afterwards to correct his mistakes and enlighten his moral sense by the weekly instructions of the pulpit, and the influence of the laws of the land ;—the teacher *must* give regular and systematic instruction in social duties. If these are truths, the teacher *has* a great work to perform. He has to lay deep the foundations of public justice. He has to give that profound and quick sense of the sacredness of right, and the everlasting obligation of truth, without which, law will have no sanctity, private contracts no binding force, the pulpit no reverence, justice no authority. If these are truths, and if it is a greater thing to

form than to reform, it becomes all parents to look to it, what manner of men they have for their children's teachers.

The question recurs, How shall this moral instruction in social duties be given ?

Cases are continually occurring, in every school, of the violation of these duties in the intercourse of the children with each other. These should never be allowed to pass without the lesson which they suggest. A boy may be easily made to understand, that if he injures the property of another, or defaces the school-house, he as really violates the law of property, as if he took money, since he subjects somebody to an expense, which is pecuniary, and also gives trouble ; and if this were fully explained, such offences would cease to be so common. The same may be said of the petty thefts of books, pencils and pens. They are committed because the offender is not made to understand that they are of the same complexion as stealing the money, by which these articles were purchased. These are not small matters. A child allowed in the commission of such sins, will be in danger of going on, by imperceptible degrees, to those more considerable offences against property, against which is denounced the rigor of the law. It is found that great numbers of those boys, who are sent, by a decree of the courts, to the House of Reformation in Boston, for offences which subjected them to imprisonment, took their first lesson on the wharves, where they supposed they were not seriously violating property, by taking a little molasses from a cask, or a little coffee or sugar from a bag or box. They reasoned correctly, doubtless, when they said, that if there were no harm in taking a

little molasses on a stick, there could be none in taking a little more in a tin measure, and carrying it home to their poor mothers. And, if there were no harm in taking it from a wharf, there could be none in taking it from a grocer's shop. But here the law steps in, and declares that to be now criminal which before had been innocent, —such a change having been produced in the nature of right and wrong, by a hogshead of molasses' crossing a wooden threshold; and the boy who, many a time, had taken a gill from the bung with impunity, is condemned, for taking four gills at once, to three months' imprisonment,—a sentence which is commuted, by the lenity of the court, to a five years' residence at South Boston. The boys reasoned correctly; their only mistake was in supposing that they could take any amount, however small, of another person's property, without guilt; and all this could have been made as clear to them at school, as it is to you or me. Not that I would recommend this process of tracing to consequences. The delicate conscience of a child is quick enough to perceive, if it be once aroused, that the real sin is in violating property at all, and that the amount makes no difference in the real nature of the crime. And it is not conscience, but a base, earthly prudence which you address, when you teach a child to beware, not of sin, but of the jail or the gallows. Even this low motive it may be necessary sometimes to bring into operation; but let it be understood that this is not moral instruction, but prudential,— no better than that of the savage Spartan, Beware *how* you steal.

The *lessons* of school present frequent occasions for moral instruction. History abounds in them. History

has been described as philosophy teaching by example. It might be called moral philosophy so teaching; for there is no more suitable vehicle of moral instruction. And, unless taught under the guidance of a moral principle, the study of most periods of history is of very doubtful value. Take the Roman history, for example, which enters so largely, in one shape or another, into the course of study of those who receive what is called a liberal education. Julius Cæsar, in his account of his wars in Gaul,* coolly tells us, on one occasion, that he determined to cross the Rhine, that is, to invade Germany, for several reasons; the best of which was, to strike terror into the Germans, by showing them that the Romans could and would invade them if they chose,—and a second, to punish a nation who had had the temerity to tell him, what was certainly true, that he had no rights on their side of the river, and they should there do as they pleased. He accordingly builds a bridge, and goes over into Germany; and though he cannot find the free nation whom he had seen fit to consider his enemy, he burns all the villages and houses he can find, destroys the harvests, and having, he says, gone far enough for his glory and advantage, he returns and breaks down the bridge. Now, it is common to spend time and take pains to explain the construction of this famous bridge. But what must be the moral effect of this history, if not a word is said of the violation of right by invading an independent nation, or of the atrocity of this wanton destruction of villages and harvests? Again; a Roman, who is often held up as a model of the old Roman virtue, was wont to conclude

* De Bello Gallico, iv, 16, et seq.

all his speeches with, "This I say, and that Carthage should be destroyed!" What must be the effect upon the moral sense of the learner, to read, without any remark from his teacher upon their violation of humanity, these truculent words, uttered by a man who is pointed out to his admiration, in regard to a city, to destroy which the Romans had no more right than we have to invade China?

The morality of the Roman poetry and mythology is still less questionable. How often has the friendship of Nisus and Euryalus been extolled! The only story we have of them is of their stealing, in the darkness of night, into the enemy's camp, and, after having glutted their appetite for blood, by the murder, in sleep, of numbers of their enemies, of being discovered and put to death, in consequence of carrying off the spoils. What must be the effect of passing such a scene without a comment, speaking only of the fidelity of their friendship, and saying nothing of the savageness of this midnight murder!

Similar observations might be made on the character of most of those who figure in heathen history and mythology, both gods and mortals. And is the history of Christian nations much better? Or the writers of modern history, the Humes, and Gibbons, and Voltaires, by whom we are taught the great lessons of history,—are they safer moral guides? Would you, therefore, exclude ancient and modern history, and the literature of antiquity, from the circle of liberal studies? By no means. The same rule would exclude a greater part of our own history. The story of our intercourse with the Indian tribes about us, a story of systematic encroachment,

wrong, and injustice, has been and is told by writers calling themselves Christian, in a spirit which will hardly gain in a comparison with the moral tone of Cæsar's Commentaries, and which often falls short of the honest faithfulness of Tacitus. These books must be read, but it is the business of the teacher to stand by, and, pointing to the gospel, to show constantly wherein the character of the event or actor falls below that standard.

This teaching of moral truth by details is a duty of which any faithful Christian teacher is capable.

But moral instruction is too important to be left to the occasions that may occur in the business of the school, or to those that may be presented by the studies that are pursued. The moral sentiments are the highest of our faculties, and their education should form an integral part of the teacher's plan. Systematic moral instruction can be given only by assigning, in the arrangements for each day, an hour at which attention shall be exclusively given to it. For this purpose, the teacher must provide himself with some good treatise on moral philosophy, like Wayland's or Parkhurst's, and, selecting a portion, prepare himself for each lesson by careful study and thought upon some one particular point. Instruction from such a human source should have authority given it by quotations from the Scriptures; and a diligent searcher of the Scriptures will not find it difficult to discover passages bearing upon every point of human duty. The course I would recommend is one which I have myself pursued for some years, and which I find adapted to the end in view. It is to begin each day by reading a portion selected from the New or Old Testament, accompanying it with observations upon the particular duty which I wish

to enforce. These observations need not, and should not, occupy more than five or ten minutes. In this way the great cardinal duties may be more or less fully explained in the morning exercises of ten or twelve weeks. A course of instruction intended to cover a larger period may be more in detail, and extend to a greater number of particulars. The great danger to be guarded against in these lessons is formality. They lose their value as soon as they cease to be earnest.

The third class of duties in which a child should be instructed, includes personal duties,—his duties to himself. These duties are of great importance, as it is upon a knowledge of and obedience to them, that the happiness of his existence will depend. These duties are comprehended in self-knowledge, self-control, and self-culture. In regard to these, more instruction is needed, and less is usually given, than in regard to either of the other two classes. To urge us to discover and perform our duties in this respect, the deep-seated desire of happiness, the strongest and most universal of our desires, seems to have been implanted. Yet so deplorably have these duties been overlooked, so lamentably have they been disregarded, that we are almost ready to conclude that this strong desire has been implanted, as the voice of antiquity, *Know thyself*, has been uttered, and the command of Christ been given,—all equally in vain.

Self-knowledge implies a knowledge of the body and its powers, of the nature of the animal desires, appetites, and passions, of the intellectual faculties, and the moral sentiments ; of the laws of the health of all these parts of the system, and of the modes by which each is to be controlled or cultivated. But why, it may be asked,

make a knowledge of the body and of the laws of physical health a part of self-knowledge ? Who is the Creator of the body ? Who established these laws of health ? One would think, from the slight manner in which we often find a knowledge of the body and its laws regarded, that it was a common opinion that "some of nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well,"—so far as the body is concerned. But if the body be really God's workmanship, its laws must be God's laws, and worthy of man's, or at least of children's, study.

The body was made by God as the dwelling-place of the soul, and they are so connected that the health of the one depends upon the health of the other. A person fully convinced of this will feel that he has no more right to violate the laws of the health of the body, than he has to violate the moral laws, or those relating to the health of the soul. If these laws were universally taught, and the conscience made to recognize them, we should soon cease to see,—a sight by which we are now so often shocked,—good and religious men sacrificing the body, and with it their usefulness to their fellow-men, by deliberate violations of the laws of that Great Being, to whose service they profess to have devoted themselves, body and soul.

The next part of personal duty is self-control. The child should be early taught that there are parts of his nature which he has in common with the brutes ; that these,—the animal propensities,—good within certain limits, tend always to excess ; a portion of them tempting him to beastly sensuality, another portion to falsehood and to savage rage and cruelty ; that a great lesson he is to learn is to keep these passions and appetites under the

control of the higher parts of his nature, his enlightened reason and conscience; and that the Saviour has given instruction of infinite value, when he taught that out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, and when he pronounced a blessing on the pure in heart; thus establishing the rule of the wise man of old, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." The instruction he obtains from examining his own structure, and that obtained from revelation, confirming each other in this striking manner, the child will be prepared to admit the duty of self-control; he will understand how he may exert it, and that it is his highest interest to exercise it.

The duty of self-culture is an inference from the knowledge of the powers with which man is endowed, and the consideration that these are the gift of God, and that it is his will that they should be cultivated and improved to the utmost. The child should be taught that he has a great variety of faculties, each of which has some object in the external world of things, or in their Author, towards which it is naturally directed; that all are improved, almost indefinitely, by exercise, and that happiness is made by the Creator to consist in the exercise of the faculties upon their appropriate objects. What kind of information is likely to be more practically useful than this, not in procuring wealth, but in securing that on account of which wealth has its only value,—happiness? We should convince a child that he has within his own nature, at his own control, and almost independent of external circumstances, many sources of happiness which will certainly yield it, if allowed to flow in their natural, appointed channels. We should show him that the objects of his faculties are in the things

about him, in his fellow-creatures, in the Creator himself; and that he will miss a great happiness for every one of these faculties which he neglects to cultivate; that, if he neglects them all, he will have, instead of exhaustless sources of enjoyment, bringing him good from every quarter, only a deep sense of unsatisfied desires, of vague, useless longings, which at last will make life itself seem to be one long, sad scene of bitter disappointment. What knowledge, which we can communicate, will be more likely to lead him to become a useful man, and a good citizen, than a conviction that one of his highest faculties has the happiness of his fellow-creatures for its object, and that if he prepares himself to live, and does live, a life of active benevolence, he will derive from it constant and elevated pleasure, which he forfeits and loses by a life of selfishness? What more likely to lead him to strive after perfection, than to show him, what he will soon feel in his own consciousness to be true, that one of the noblest of his faculties was given him to lead him to glorious conceptions of the beautiful, the excellent, the pure, the perfect, and to enable him to obey, and to find delight in obeying, the divine command, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect"? Or what kind of instruction is better adapted to make him hold it a reasonable service to reverence and worship the Infinite Being, than to know that that Being has placed first and highest in his child's nature the faculty which aspires to worship, as its happiest and worthiest office? By what course will you so surely divest the youthful mind of the fatal error, which threatens to blast all that is healthy, and to poison all that is pure, in society, that the possession of wealth and power is happiness, and their ac-

quisition a lofty end, as by showing that happiness consists only in the use of the faculties, according to their nature, upon the objects for which they were bestowed ?

It would be easy to enlarge upon this part of my subject, and it is an eminently practical one. But the rapid sketch I am taking forbids my dwelling upon any one point, and I have already, perhaps, dwelt upon this too long ; but it is impossible to give undue prominence to the great and comprehensive duty of so improving and elevating our whole nature, as to render it worthy to be consecrated to the service of God and man.

Growing out of this duty is the habit of self-examination, which should be enjoined upon a child. He may easily be taught to ask himself, "Have I done what I ought ?" and the habit of comparing himself with himself, of asking, "Have I done better ? Have I made progress ? Have I faithfully used my faculties ? Have I availed myself, as I ought, of the opportunities which have been presented to me ?"—This habit may be substituted for the always questionable and often pernicious habit of comparing himself with others.

This leads me to consider some of those practices which often prevail in school, which I regard as foreign from the cultivation of the moral sense, and sometimes even hostile to it ; hostile, because they tend to give activity to those lower propensities which it is the office of the conscience to subdue and keep in subjection. One of them I have just alluded to. It is the practice of stimulating children to exertion, by mating them against each other, by exciting the spirit of rivalry. It is, perhaps, possible for this spirit to exist, in a generous soul, unconnected with its natural allies, jealousy, envy, and

hatred. It is, doubtless, easy for one who has without difficulty surpassed all his rivals, to look down upon them with kindness and compassion. But such are not the usual feelings of those who have been outstripped. Generous rivalry is the exception. It is idle and unphilosophical to say, such is human nature, and we must take it as we find it. We must not take it, at least we must not leave it, as we find it. The very object of education is to improve the character of the individual ; and this it must do by fostering the good and repressing the bad tendencies. Whoever will carefully observe the operation of the spirit of rivalry, will find that it is usually accompanied by a desire to pull down the rival, to detract from his merits, to depreciate his virtues. There are few who hear with pleasure the praises of a rival, and still fewer who cordially rejoice in his success. I would, therefore, discourage the spirit of rivalry, because of its tendency to excite the contentious and malignant passions, which, it seems to me, the whole force of my influence should be directed to repress.

Another practice, formerly not uncommon, seems to be founded on a mistaken view of the human character. I mean the attempt to subdue a child of an irritable and violent temperament by violence, by the rod, by brute force. If violence is to be used in school in any case, it is not in this. The remedy exasperates the disease. One who had an infinite insight into the human heart, has told us to overcome evil with good. And is savage severity, is cruelty, are blows the good wherewith you would overcome the evil of a passionate temper, in a spoilt or perverse child ? Do gentleness, mildness, forbearance grow up under such influences as these ? If

your object is to strike terror, to wreak vengeance, or to produce a seeming submission, these are doubtless very suitable means. But the fruit of severity is obduracy,—of cruelty, hatred,—of blows, resistance, or duplicity and cringing servility,—the characteristics of a slave.

Let me not be misunderstood. I would not take the rod out of the teacher's hands. It may be absolutely necessary to enforce authority, and authority must be enforced. But I would remind the teacher that the only sure foundation for authority is justice; the only thing absolutely irresistible is kindness;

> "And earthly power does then show likest God's,
> When mercy seasons justice."

In our prisons and asylums for the insane, in the management of those who have degraded themselves below humanity, by the commission of crimes against God and society, and of those who have been considered as placed beyond its pale by the visitation of heaven, the holy power of kindness is understood and acted upon. In our schools, among the hopes of tender mothers, over beings with all the attributes of man, and preparing for immortality, shall the iron reign of terror still exist? A rebellion of the poor convict, whose hand is raised against every man, because he imagines that the hand of his fellow-man is against him, is quieted by the force of love and mercy. Shall the noble boy, who, from the very exuberance of happy youthful feeling, rebels, without meaning it, or knowing what he does, against, perhaps, the silly edict of some petty tyrant, be flogged into submission? Is this a course suited to prepare him for voluntary and cheerful submission to the laws of the land?

Another point in regard to which a questionable prac-

tice often prevails, is the setting boys to be spies on each other. This tempts them to concealment, partiality, and injustice,—sins in comparison with which there is no offence against school regulations that can be committed, which is not absolutely insignificant. Better should whispering, idleness, and practical jokes, go unpunished and undetected, than that a boy should be led to report unfairly, or not to report, what he has seen, or to report what he has not seen. Virtue is strengthened by resisting temptation; but it is destroyed by yielding. If we create the temptation, therefore, we should be sure that the virtue is strong enough to resist it.*

In regard to the lower animal propensities, the only safe principle is, that nothing should be allowed which would have a tendency, directly or indirectly, to excite them. In many places there prevails an alarming and criminal indifference upon this point. It is one towards which the attention of the teacher should be carefully directed. No sound should be suffered from the lips; no word, or figure, or mark, should be allowed to reach the eyes,—to deface the walls of house or outhouse,—which could give offence to the most sensitive delicacy. This is the teacher's business. He must not be indifferent to it. He has no right to neglect it. He cannot transfer it to another. He, and he only, is responsible. It is impossible to be over-scrupulous in this matter. And the

* Akin to this practice is that still more shameful one of allowing boys to inform of each other. A teacher must be sadly deficient in all the generous qualities, who is capable of endeavoring thus to get information *against his pupils;* and what contempt must every noble-spirited boy feel for the poor wretch who is capable of descending to such meanness.

committee should see that the teacher does his duty; otherwise, all his lessons in duty are of no avail, and the school, instead of being a source of purity, delicacy, and refinement, becomes a fountain of corruption, throwing out poisonous waters, and rendering the moral atmosphere more pestiferous than that fabled fountain of old, over which no creature of heaven could fly and escape death.

Another way in which morality is to be taught is, by example and influence. And this is the most effectual, and indeed, the only effectual teaching. It is in vain that you will con the moral lesson, in vain will you preach homilies upon virtue and goodness;—unless the heart speaks, the words are uttered in vain. The first care of the teacher, then, is with his own character, his own heart, his own life. What he *is* teaches. Let him not think to flatter himself, and cajole others, by saying he might teach morals if he would. He must, he will, he does teach, whether he will or not. If he is really interested in the subject, if his moral sentiments are in a state of healthy activity, his whole deportment will declare it; not only his words, but the tone in which he utters them, his eye, his features, his step, every thing will speak the deep feelings which pervade his inmost breast. He will earnestly seek for modes to bring his principles to act upon his pupils, and he will find them.

If he be immoral, his immorality will teach. In spite of himself, it will teach. The profane word, the proud look, the impatient movement, the harsh expression, the violent tone, the indecent gesture,—each will teach its own bad lesson. The foul breath of the drunkard teaches no less really than his foul language.

If he be of a character which the Great Teacher de-

clares to be farther from the kingdom of heaven than either, if he be indifferent,—if he care for none of these things,—his very lukewarmness teaches. To say by one's actions that the great law of justice is of no consequence, that the love of our neighbor is of no consequence, that the reverence and worship of the Infinite Father are of no consequence,—this is to teach selfishness, injustice, impiety.

If he be, what is infinitely worse than either, that basest and most loathsome of all creatures, that object at once of the abhorrence of God and the detestation of good men, a hypocrite,—if he would pass with men as a teacher of righteousness,—he still teaches,—the worst lesson that can be taught. He clothes these angels, Charity, Truth, Veneration, in the habiliments of goblins damned, and then makes them objects of disgust to the poor children who are under his influence. He does more. He fills the pure and open heart of childhood with suspicion and distrust. He tempts those who receive his instructions to look ever afterwards upon all the ministers of goodness; the Samaritan, upon his errand of mercy; the simple, just man, who denies himself that he may pay the last penny to his creditor; the sincere man of God, whose feelings rise in habitual reverence and thankfulness towards Heaven;—to look upon all these as self-seekers, as interested, as deceivers of themselves and others; to say all in one word,—as hypocrites.

In conclusion, let me be allowed to say to my brother and sister teachers, If you would teach the great truths of morality effectually, you must teach with authority,—with the authority of an elevated character, of earnest desires and strenuous efforts to do your duty,—of a mind

stored with rich and various knowledge, with the spoils of time, the observations of men, the fruits of meditation; with the authority of a spirit chastened, exalted, and purified by the teachings of the Saviour of mankind. If you feel that reverence for God and his laws, which you would teach, show the sincerity of your feeling by gaining a knowledge of his glorious and magnificent works. If you would "justify the ways of God to man,"—learn what are the great laws of his creation, by studying your own structure, the laws of the immortal mind he has given you, and by studying the history of mankind. If you would show the value of that self-culture, which you would enjoin upon your pupils, repress whatever is mean and earthly in your own character, and cherish and elevate what is pure and spiritual; giving to every noble faculty of mind and of soul all the activity and energy of which it is capable, and showing yourselves as models of the just and philosophic spirit, and of the serene and cheerful devotion to labor and duty,—which become a servant of God, consecrated to the highest purposes of his existence.

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